

West Swamp News

Volume 15, Issue 1

December 2025/January 2026

2025 in review, a Ministry Team perspective

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FYI

- Mark your calendar for Senior Luncheons on Dec. 18 and Jan. 15.
- Need an alternative gift? Check out MCC's Christmas Giving catalog at <https://mcc.org/christmas#!>
- Save the Date: The Annual Business Meeting is January 25.

It is hard to believe that another year is almost in the books. Soon we will be in 2026. Time seems to accelerate as we enter the Advent Season with all the Holiday planning and preparation as we anticipate the Prince of Peace arriving in the form of a baby on that special night over 2,000 years ago.

Along with the Advent Season culminating in the birth of Jesus, we tend to reflect back on the year as it winds down, with all its share of highs and lows.

Your Ministry Team has been very busy this year, experiencing its share of peaks and valleys and having had some serious and at times difficult conversations. Looking back, here are some reflections of 2025.

Celebrations include the completion of the playground project with the installation of benches. Now parents, grandparents, and others guests have a place to sit and relax as they enjoy children playing in a safe and fun environment.

We created the Church Legacy Planning Committee to discuss and make

recommendations for the future of our church. An AED unit was purchased for any medical emergencies that may arise in the future. Updates to our Constitution and Bylaws were also proposed and approved with more to come on the horizon.

Concerns have included some of a personal nature. Both Pastor Michael and Lynne have taken on the added role of caregiver for loved ones with serious medical situations. As a result, there have been instances of limited office availability. Your Ministry Team has worked with both to give them flexibility under these circumstances.

Speaking of Pastor Michael, with his second term coming to a close, over numerous meetings, we worked long and hard on his review with surveys and many serious discussions, agreeing to disagree at times to make the best determination on the future of our congregation as it has been shrinking.

Attendance concerns have been on our minds and hearts, which lead to a congregational roundtable

discussion held in October.

Throughout most of the year, as requested, we worked to obtain a response from Camp Men-O-Lan as to their disassociation from the Mosaic Menonite Conference. Then came Mosaic's recommendation to suspend its membership in MC USA at the Fall Delegate Assembly, which passed by a three quarter affirmation vote.

Finally, during this season of Advent and all the giving that is associated with it, I wish to give the gift of thanks to everyone who has been able to volunteer and help by sharing their gifts and talents here at West Swamp. I am truly grateful for those that were able to help keep things running smoothly. I encourage anyone who may not be actively involved to consider volunteering in the future.

During this season, please take time to give thanks to God for the gift of Jesus and the light that He brought into the world.

Merry Christmas!

~ Carl Raub

Advent: Counting the days

I love Advent. I am not always good at waiting, but the slow build up of anticipation through Advent has always appealed to me. It gives me time to think, to contemplate, to prepare as I wait to celebrate an event that has already happened, yet happens again year after year.

One way I've passed that love on to my family is through Advent calendars. When my children were little, we started with the ones with the little perforated doors that held a chocolate treat that covered a character from the Christmas story.

One year, I made a chain of envelopes. Each day we cut one off and did the activity found inside. (They didn't know that I was filling the envelopes just a couple days ahead to make sure it was an activity that we would have time for that day.)

One year I bought a fabric Advent calendar at Ten Thousand Villages, similar to the one below. I used that for many years,



putting different things in the pockets: fair trade mini chocolate bars, Bible verses, quotes about Christmas. Each year I tried to do something different.

One year I decided to get a nativity puzzle, divide it into sections and fill the calendar pockets with the pieces. As we worked each day's pieces, we read and discussed a portion of scripture. Sounds easy in theory, but it turned out to be more prep work than I anticipated. The puzzle I got was much harder than I expected. I had to work it first to be able to separate sections, and it took multiple nights after everyone else went to bed. I'm still surprised that no one asked about the card table with the tablecloth that all of a sudden turned up in the living room. Fortunately, it was manageable to work in small sections each evening and ended up being some nice family time.

Our Advent calendar tradition lapsed for a while once Ben and Emily were out of the house. I sometimes remembered to get mini chocolates for the pockets, but it wasn't a priority.

Then two years ago I decided I missed doing an Advent calendar and came up with a plan. On Dec. 1, 2023, I surprised Ben and Emily with an email that con-

tained scripture and a YouTube link to a song. Each day a new passage and a new song. I had such fun searching for songs, some new to me, others old favorites.

The next year two of my sisters and one brother-in-law asked to be added to the email list. This



year, while home for Thanksgiving, Ben offered to take it over this year. A very sweet gesture, but since I already started my song list, we decided to work on it together with Ben working on the scripture part. I'm looking forward to the collaboration!

I encourage you to enjoy Advent, to savor the anticipation and not rush right to Christmas. If you're interested, you can share *our* Advent calendar. Contact me if you would like to receive a scripture and song email each day leading up to Christmas.

Blessings on your Advent journey,

~ *Lynne Rush*

DISCO: Continue the journey

“Ringing through the sky, shepherd boy... A song, a song high above the trees, with a voice as big as the sea!” I would guess many of you started reading those words to the tune of the beloved song we sing during the Christmas season. Do we *see*? Do we *hear*? Do we *know*? And finally, *listen* to what I say!

In some ways this song progresses much like our journey as followers of Jesus. Perhaps we had had an encounter with God or needed to hit rock bottom in order to *see* the love of Jesus. Maybe this led to conversations with friends, listening to a pastor, reading the Bible, or praying in order to *hear* God.

Next, we decide we *know* we need Jesus as our Lord and Savior and *knowing* that changes us and how we live. This should lead to us telling people everywhere to *listen* to what we have to say! But, may I suggest, that we often find ourselves back at the beginning of the

journey and needing to *see* and *hear* all over again and *knowing* we need to recommit our lives to following Jesus. We are walking by faith, tripping constantly. Thankfully the song ends with a promise that “He will bring us goodness and light” and I believe that is true of our journey as well. No matter how many mountains and valleys, u-turns and detours, tunnels and bridges, or blatantly missed signs, Jesus still brings goodness and light.

I share this reflection in relation (hopefully) to discipling commission because to be a disciple is to be a follower of Jesus. Following Jesus looks like practicing the way of Jesus. As the discipling commission deacon, I hope I have provided diverse opportunities at West Swamp for folks to engage with on their journey following Jesus. I will not be staying on for another term as deacon. The commission will also be

without congregational representatives next term. Please take time to think on this and pray about it.

In the mean time, the TLC class continues to meet in the fellowship hall for a more casual conversation about God and life. The Bible Project class continues to meet in person or virtually as they take a deep dive into Exodus.

In closing, I share this quote from Ashely Morgan Jackson: “Maybe we need more Christians to talk about how hard following and obeying God actually is. Not for some of us, for all of us. No one has it all together. Letting God change you is hard. Dying to yourself is hard.”

Thankfully, we have a promise that Jesus will bring goodness and light.

~ *Katie Mood*

Community: Cookies for a caring cause

This Christmas, we will again be partnering with the local Salvation Army and the Quakertown Ministerium to add some homemade joy directly to local families in need. We are collecting donations of Christmas cookies to be included in holiday care packages distributed by the Salvation Army. This simple act of kindness—sharing a batch of your favorite holiday cookies—

can brighten the season for a family in our community. The cookie packages will be decorated and will include an invitation to our church Christmas Eve service. There is a sign-up list in the Fellowship Room. Please bring homemade or store-bought cookies to church by Friday, Dec. 12, as we will be packaging them that evening. Thank you!

~ *Nancy Jacobs*



Stewardship: Keeping things up to date

The Stewardship Commission has been systematically renewing CDs that had rolled over, simplifying accounts, updating signers to attending and living members, and moving cemetery accounts to the same institution as the main church accounts for better and easier transactions and accounting since I began my role and got to see where everything sat after the Stewardship Deacon position had been vacant for some time. This will greatly improve accounting, smoothness of transactions in/out, and interest percentages on our investments.

The AED unit was purchased and is in full compliance, but we are waiting to mount it in the fellowship hall until the we have at

least one compliantly trained person in attendance. **PLEASE NOTE that does not prohibit anyone from using the unit as it is automatic and provides loud and clear audible instructions once it is mounted.** Training is scheduled for Saturday Dec. 20 from 9-11:15 am, and I currently still have 3 spots open. If anyone is interested, please call or email me. I'm glad to have this life safety device available should the need arise.

The budget committee will be convening after Thanksgiving. Please assist in keeping us on target for year end, and we will be keeping the current deficit in mind for next year's budget. Also, remember to report significant

"in-kind" donations as discussed at last year's business meeting. This can be done anonymously, but it has great potential to give a better idea of the total annual member contributions needed to keep the church and facility running in its current state.

Otherwise, typical inspections and recurring maintenance have continued or has been scheduled. We did have a heating issue with the one boiler which was not identified, but I was able to resolve it. If anyone notices a persistent issue please notify us in case we need to escalate our heating service that is scheduled for mid-December. As of now, there is no problem to be diagnosed.

~ Alex Parzych

Mission: Winter holiday season

We are collecting Coins for Sharing through Dec. 21. They will be added to the Christmas Eve offering divided between Ripple, Crossroads Community Center, and Solidarity & Harmony Church. Let's make this a great start to the New Year.

There is a box in the fellowship hall to collect new or lightly used clean blankets and coats for Ripple. With the forecast calling for a cold winter, I am sure they will appreciate all donations. We will be collecting these through Dec. 14.

Code Blue opened its doors Nov. 15 as the weather warrants. They have 60-65 volunteers and can always use more.

~Chris Allem

Worship: Christmas festivities

December is a busy month! Advent starts Nov. 30, as we look for the birth of Jesus the Christ child.

Our first event is a community Carol Sing on Dec. 7. Come at 3 pm and bring your family and

friends for a fun time of singing your favorite carols. Refreshments will be served.

Dec. 24 is our night of music and scripture on Christmas Eve. Invite others to share in the joy of Christmas. It starts at 7 pm.

Jan. 4 is Epiphany Sunday, as the wise men follow the star to Jesus.

Have a happy holiday season, with Jesus at the center.

~Joan Hallman



DRINK COCOA & DO GOOD

100% of ALL Proceeds go to AHUB our Quakertown Code Blue Homeless Shelter!



Hi! My name is Caleb; I'm 15 years old and a 9th grader. When I was 7 years old, my family took a trip to Baltimore, MD. It was there I had my first interaction with an individual who was homeless; I was blown away that there were people in this world without homes. On the ride home, my parents told me that there were people in my hometown who were homeless and a shelter

where they could stay. I knew I needed to do something to help those without homes. After some brainstorming, I came up with an idea to sell hot cocoa in the winter and my family said they would help me. We started the stand in December of 2018 and thanks to God, the community, my family, and friends – we have raised approximately \$25,000 in total for the shelter! I hope that you will be able to stop over and have some hot cocoa, eat a sweet snack, chat with friends, and enjoy the live music. ALL proceeds will go to the homeless shelter.



Caleb age 7

Live Music! Hot Cocoa! Baked Items from Local Bakeries and Private Donors!

(Including C&C Confections, Nefarious Eats Commissary/Ann Vollmer, The Farm Bakery and Events, Mercatino Italiano, Filomena's Cookie Creations, Worthy Dessert, Kitchen Katie Bakes and The King's Bake Shop)

When: Sunday, December 14th

From 2:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Where: 207 N. Ambler Street, Quakertown

Please Join Us!



west swamp
mennonite church

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Reflecting God in our
living, loving and serving



December

- 12/4 Dennis Wieand
- 12/7 Debbie Bauman
- 12/9 Penny Rice
- 12/10 Ophelia Parzych

- 12/11 Jasper Riley
- 12/15 Louise Butcher
- 12/16 Sue Gwilliam
Brent Rice
Seth Rice
- 12/17 Madison Mood
Evan Wieand
- 12/19 Bill Grube
- 12/20 Ossie Myers
- 12/24 Elliana Kirkpatrick
- 12/26 Glenn High

- 12/27 Bob Leber
Elaine Propst
- 12/29 Charles Spiess
- 12/31 Kevin Huff

January

- 1/3 Cameron Parzych
- 1/4 Grace Opdyke
- 1/11 Tom Mood
- 1/29 Katelyn Opdyke
- 1/30 Rod Rush

Calendar of Events

December

- 2, 7 pm—Community Com.
- 3, 6:30 pm—Chimin' In Practice
- 3, 7:15 pm—Choir Practice
- 7, 3 pm—Carol Sing
- 9, 7 pm—Mission Commission
- 10, 6:30 pm—Chimin' In Practice
- 10, 7:15 pm—Choir Practice
- 12, 6:30 pm—Cookie Packing
- 14, 2 pm—Caleb's Cocoa Stand
- 16, 7 pm—Ministry Team
- 17, 6:30 pm—Chimin' In Practice
- 17, 7:15 pm—Choir Practice
- 18, 12 pm—Senior Luncheon
- 20, 9 am—AED Training
- 21, 12 pm—Sunday Lunch Bunch
- 24, 7 pm—Christmas Eve Service

January

- 1—Church offices closed
- 4—Epiphany Sunday
- 6, 8 am—Knotting resumes
- 6, 7 pm—Community Com.
- 7, 6:30 pm—Chimin' In Practice
- 7, 7:15 pm—Choir Practice
- 13, 7 pm—Mission Com.
- 14, 6:30 pm—Worship Com.
- 15, 12 pm—Senior Luncheon
- 18, 12 pm—Sunday Lunch Bunch
- 20, 7 pm—Ministry Team
- 21, 6:30 pm—Chimin' In Practice
- 21, 7:15 pm—Choir Practice
- 25—Annual Meeting

Regular Activity

Knotting break after Dec. 2, resuming Jan. 6
Tuesdays, 8 am—Knotting & Quilting